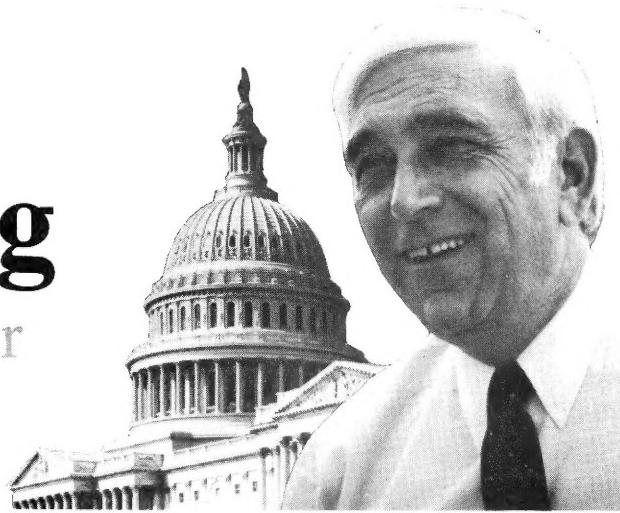


Frank

Lautenberg

United States Senator
for New Jersey



For Immediate Release
Wednesday, May 1, 1991

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Lautenberg Forum Focuses On Auto Theft Problem

Newark, NJ -- Sen. Frank R. Lautenberg (D-N.J.) today chaired a forum in Newark to examine the nature and scope of the vehicle theft problem, and to solicit ideas on how the federal government can help reduce auto thefts.

"Auto theft is a major problem in New Jersey and around the nation. For an increasing number of kids and hardened criminals, stealing cars has become a way of life," Lautenberg said.

"Congress should move to expand federal efforts to reduce vehicle thefts. The rate of auto thefts has exploded, costing car owners time and money, increasing insurance rates for all drivers, and threatening others as kids stealing cars take them on wild joy rides and police chases."

Lautenberg discussed possible federal initiatives, including:

- * Improving federal requirements for identifying vehicles, to make it harder for chop shops to escape detection;
- * Strengthening federal customs programs to intercept stolen cars being exported;
- * Banning convicted auto thieves from selling cars or otherwise engaging in automobile-related businesses;
- * Establishment of a national "consent to stop" program, based on a New York City program, under which vehicle owners can agree to have their car stopped if it is being driven during certain hours. Participants in the program mark their cars with decals to alert police.

"Auto theft is an interstate problem of growing national importance. The federal government should intensify the fight against organized, criminal car theft rings," Lautenberg said.

Lautenberg said that the number of auto theft offenses increased by 42 percent between 1985 and 1989, to over 1.5 million cars in 1989. The estimated value of motor vehicles stolen nationwide in 1989 was over \$8 billion. Nationally, a motor vehicle was stolen every 20 seconds.

Five of the top 10 cities in vehicle theft (thefts/population) were in New Jersey:

<u>City (nat'l rank)</u>	<u>Thefts/100,000 people</u>
Newark (1st)	4,994
Elizabeth (2nd)	3,696
Irvington (4th)	3,690
Camden (6th)	3,178
Trenton (9th)	2,822

"Almost every New Jerseyan knows someone who's car has been ripped off. It's a crime that touches every town and almost every neighborhood. Local law enforcement agencies and the federal government need to work together to address this problem," Lautenberg concluded.